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15. Vendor of medicines

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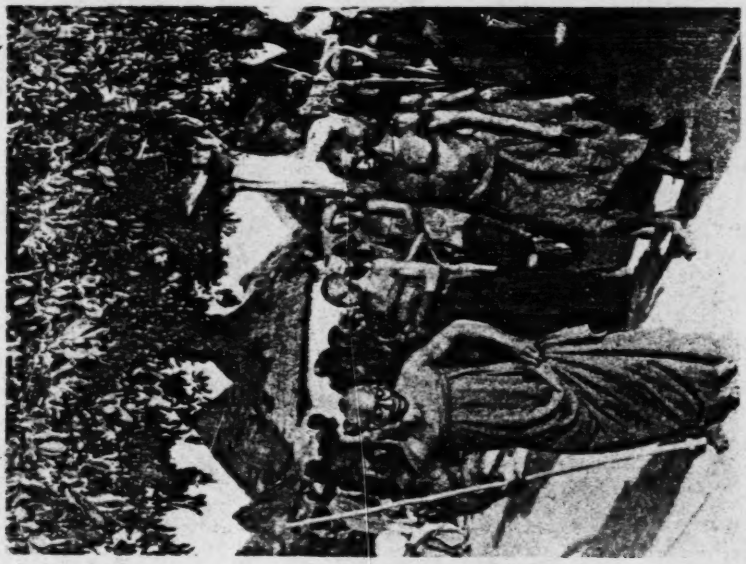

14. *Dzakó* dance

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the second for the chief, who was worried by the numerous cases of illness in the village; and the third for a young man who sacrificed a fowl so that his wife might bear a child. We note that the *tídzana* is appealed to for much the same reason as the *ketsá*; let me note also that the third suppliant came of a family which 'owned' a particular medicine reputed to cure sterility, even though he himself had invoked the sacred chain instead. In his case as in all others the sacrifice had been indicated by the diviners, who are the final judges of the appropriate supernatural remedy.

I mentioned before that the Chain of Tsoede formerly also served as an ordeal of deadly efficacy and as an instrument of execution.[1] It may seem puzzling that a tool of death should be believed to restore health and fertility. Yet even as a tool of death the Chain of Tsoede is a *kuti*; indeed, it is used to kill because it has the supernatural power also to purify the executioner and sanctify the deed. And as the *kuti* is always a force, divine in origin and unspecific in nature, so it can, by definition, be made to do many things.

We may add the ritual *ndáduma* to this list of movable rites although it figures equally among the fixed ceremonials. In its movable form, it is concerned with the rise and fall of the river and is performed when the seasonal floods are late or of threatening dimensions (though not sufficiently grave to warrant the performance of the *ketsá*). The name of the ritual, 'Father Niger', refers to a whole species of spirits inhabiting various localities on the river. The most powerful of these river spirits is said to live at Bazumagi, a small village up-river from Jebba. Here the local priest performs a special version of the ceremonial, which takes place only when ordered by the *Kuta* of the Kede. In the course of this ceremonial the priest wades into the river and throws a stone ashore, the place where the stone drops being believed to show that year's highwater mark. In Jebba, the ritual is in the hands of the *Tswanya*, who sacrifices a white cock, some beer, and a little honey (a favourite food of all river spirits). I did not witness the movable ritual but only the fixed version, which is the last in the cycle of rites falling in the ninth month; it was performed on 5th December, succeeding the ritual *dzakó* by two days. The actual observance, however, is the same in both rituals, though the fixed form bears not only on the river floods, but also, more generally, on health, prosperity, and childbirth in the village. In neither case can the *ndáduma* be made to serve the private interests of individuals or

[1] See above, p. 32.—The name *tídzana* is said to mean 'head (*eti*) of Dzana', Dzana being the name of the legendary first victim of this method of execution.

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V

MEDICINE

I. RATIONAL AND MYSTICAL PROCEDURES

755 757 THE term 'medicine' has been adopted mainly because it is simple and convenient without distorting too much the meaning of the Nupe word *cigbe*. The English equivalent, however, does not quite render the implications of the vernacular concept; for though the latter includes typical remedies, that is, materials applied for a strictly therapeutic purpose (as the Nupe see it), it equally includes materials whose alleged efficacy goes far beyond the treatment of ailments. In this latter sense *cigbe* is a substance or object which exercises remote and miraculous effects upon the efficacy of other objects, for example, tools or weapons, upon the outcome of human efforts of all kinds, and upon human fate in general. The correct though clumsy translation, then, would be 'efficacious substance' or 'force-in-substance' (as *kuti* meant 'force-in-ritual').

755 757 278 Indeed, the important thing about *cigbe* is that it is always a substance, compounded of natural materials which anyone in possession of the recipe can collect and process by relatively simple procedures such as pulverizing, boiling, mixing, or charring. Most Nupe, incidentally, maintain that the essential ingredients of *cigbe* are always roots of trees.[1] It is tempting to conclude that here the empirical knowledge of the processes of plant growth has led to the assumption of some inherent but communicable force stored up in the roots of plants and trees. Which assumption would fit in well with the idea that all forms of illness connote a weakening of the life soul. But no one theorizes on these lines. Altogether, Nupe medicine shows little concern with theory, metaphysical or otherwise. As regards the alleged importance of roots, the various *cigbe* recipes show that herbs, grasses, the leaves of trees, or animal matter are employed as often. The power of *cigbe*, then, lies in materials of almost any sort if suitably processed and combined, and the knowledge of *cigbe* is precisely this skill of 'using ingredients'.[1]

[1] Two informants, in fact, assured me that the very word *cigbe* was a contraction of *cigbā gbere*, 'tree root'.

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Let me summarize. By our criteria of rational and mystical intent the whole range of non-therapeutic *cigbe* together with a good portion of the therapeutic ones would fall in the category of transcendental practices (religious or 'magical'); while only the rest of the cures proper, good, bad, and indifferent, would belong on the side of reason or near-reason. And since a great many of the cures in the former category are 'objectively' as futile or absurd as the non-therapeutic variety, it may be said that the Nupe tend to treat as 'magical' what is, by all standards, magical and to aim at miraculous effects by means openly designed for miracles.

2. PHARMACOPOEIA NUPEANA

It seems convenient to insert here a fuller description of Nupe medicines and medical (or pseudo-medical) treatments. Their therapeutic or non-therapeutic character will become clear from the description, as will also the share of 'irrational' or mystical observances. We must, however, anticipate the various classes of medicine experts and briefly state their respective specialities. First, we have the guild of barber doctors, who are all Mohammedans and whose craft is entirely therapeutic and would-be empirical; a few minor instances of 'ritualization' do not contradict the generally rational intent. Secondly, there is the corresponding and predominantly pagan order of *cigbeciłi* or *bociłi* ('medicine-men'), whose practice, both therapeutic and non-therapeutic, invariably betrays mystical intent. Thirdly, there are a few individual experts who belong to neither organization and may employ any kind of *cigbe*. Lastly, we shall meet with the owners of hereditary medicines, vested in the lineage or (in Nupe parlance) 'house'; these are both therapeutic and non-therapeutic, and always conspicuously mystical. In one isolated case a conspicuously 'mystical' medicine is owned by a whole community. Let me also recall that some medical practitioners are diviners at the same time, though there is no firmer link between the two professions.

These are some of the remedies known to the barber-doctors of Bida. Stomach trouble is treated by means of various potions: one consists of the infusion of a certain swamp plant; another, of the infusion of the charred bark of the oil-palm, sheanut tree or locust-bean tree, mixed with natron;[1] a third, of the pounded roots of a certain tree, mixed with powdered eggshell, dried in the sun and then taken with water. Light headache is cured by burning a certain common plant and making the patient inhale the fumes,

[1] The 'natron' is natural carbonate of soda from Lake Chad which is on sale in all Nupe markets.

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or by preparing a potion from bits of earth extracted from a termite mound. For severe headache one applies an ointment to the eyes, compounded of the dried kernels of a fruit tree, the bark from the roots of another, cloves, and powdered antimony. Sometimes headache is treated quasi-surgically, by a species of bleeding; the barber makes a number of fine incisions into the patient's forehead and then rubs a paste of dried locust-beans and natron into the cuts. The counter-irritation thus induced may well offer a temporary relief, though the bleeding itself is probably too slight to have any effect; the cure, however, has an odd conclusion, the patient's head being knocked gently three times against the wall.

Ulcers and wounds are treated with powdered bark or roots, used either dry or damp, and left on the wound for two to three days. Broken limbs are first massaged with a salve made of palm-oil and the dried and powdered leaves of a certain tree (another remedy including dirt from a hen house and charred earth from a termite mound), after which one applies a ligature of rope, using four sticks as splints. The ligature is removed after three days, but the massage with the ointment is continued. If the fracture does not heal, this treatment is followed up with a 'stronger' one, to wit, a massage with snake poison. For smallpox one gives a potion made of the pods of a certain vine growing in the bush. There is also a 'prophylactic' treatment, applied when an epidemic is threatening; it consists either in drinking an infusion of the bark of the locust-bean tree, boiled together with some grains of sorghum or millet, or in fumigating the house, at night, by burning certain herbs. Pounded hibiscus seeds, taken like snuff, are given to patients suffering from asthma. For fever accompanied by rigor (malaria?) one drinks the boiled juice of the pawpaw mixed with natron; a more 'magical' cure consists in inhalations of the fumes from three ingredients burned together in an old, broken pot (never a new one)—a powdered herb, the swamp plant mentioned before, and twigs taken from a vulture's nest. We shall meet again with this predilection for old pots when discussing the medicines of the *cigbeci* experts; the vulture plays a part also in another remedy of the barber-doctors, applied to sore eyes: they are bathed in ash-water mixed with a pulverized vulture's leg. Other herbal concoctions are used in the treatment of gonorrhœa (called *tuwashi*), syphilis (called *tunjeri*), and sleeping sickness; these remedies are similar in that the first two are said to increase the typical secretion until 'the whole disease leaves the body', while the last brings on diarrhœa, the germs of the disease being passed with the stool. Lunacy of a non-violent nature may be treated by means of inhalations, repeated several times day and night, or by

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757 means of a potion. For the inhalation one uses leaf-tips of the oil-
palm, hair of a she-goat, and the pulverized genitals of a he-goat,
278 all burned together in a pot; the potion is made of the sap of a certain 'male' shrub (that is, the fruitless variety, called *darabagi*, 'male *dara*'), the charred bark of another, mixed with natron. The patient, having been treated in this fashion, is said to calm down and eventually to recover, though the cure can never be certain. For violent and dangerous attacks there is no agreed cure. The barber-doctors, in fact, do not treat this form of insanity at all, but other people sometimes know a treatment, though it is always said to be difficult and uncertain. Thus one informant suggested that the patients must be made to fast until they calm down; and another recommended flogging (a treatment apparently widely applied in Yoruba country).[1]

757 A final group of medicines bears on conception and virility.
278 Dried cocoyam, the charred bark of the *'savi* tree, and onions,
842 pounded and taken in water, are said to constitute a powerful
[832] aphrodisiac. Fertility of women is ensured by a potion, drunk the morning before cohabitation, made of an infusion of leaves of the tamarind tree mixed with natron. Delivery is facilitated by rubbing the womb with three herbs after they have been soaked in water for a night. There are also two 'contraceptive' medicines, one having a temporary effect only, the other believed to cause permanent barrenness. The former consists of two powdered herbs, mixed with bits of grass from a termite mound, and taken with water; the latter, of the charred stalk and leaves of a young cassava plant, mixed with henna root and natron, boiled in water, and drunk. The knowledge, incidentally, of the permanent 'contraceptive' is claimed to be purely platonic; the Bida practitioner at least has no chance of applying it in practice, not because he is reluctant to do so or because the Bida women avoid these shameful practices, but because they would not risk their reputation by thus openly consulting a 'doctor' in the town. Instead, my informants assured me, they go to 'medicine-men' in the villages, where they are unknown and their secret will be safe. A secret in fact it is; and here we meet with a first, though fairly mild, instance of reprehensible medicines, employed for immoral ends.

757 This list is far from complete, omitting, especially, the many
759 variants of the same kind of cure.[2] The barber-doctors do not believe in specifics in the strict sense of the word; rather, there are several treatments for each ailment, and different practitioners

[1] The informant in question came, in fact, from Shari, a village on the border of Nupe and Yoruba.

[2] I recorded altogether thirty-four remedies known to barber-doctors, which number is probably fairly exhaustive.

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will often know and apply different ones. Also, some specialize in potions or in poultices and lotions; others prefer treatment by means of inhalations, which the Nupe call *turare* (a Hausa word, meaning 'scent' or 'fumigation'). Certain more versatile experts know several remedies for the same illness, which they would try out one after the other. The position is summed up in this statement of a famous Bida 'doctor': 'Sometimes one medicine proves sufficient; but there is only one way of discovering the right one—to experiment and trust in God.' Certain barber-doctors, too, are specialists in particular diseases and are known as such. Thus only two men in Bida knew how to treat lunacy and only one Bida barber (whom I met in Ibadan, where he was staying at the time) knew how to treat sleeping sickness; similarly, there were specialists for venereal diseases, for eye complaints, and so forth. For certain ailments there are no treatments; their list includes blindness, idiocy, leprosy, elephantiasis, deafness, 'incurable syphilis'; and, oddly enough, the common cold; my informants made it quite clear that the last was too trifling a complaint to deserve the attention of 'doctors'.

As we have seen, surgical treatments are almost entirely absent, and the use of splints in fractures is considered no more important than the application of some 'strong' salve or ointment. The barbers, in fact, herbalists at heart, deprecate the 'use of the knife' and emphatically deny its value. Said the head of the barbers' guild: 'The knife begets pain; how could it cure?' Though the same few herbs or plants appear in the majority of remedies, this does not mean that they alone have curative properties. On the contrary, it is considered that all plants contain some medicine, even if its nature or extraction are not known. It is considered equally certain that this medical knowledge, far from being static, is growing all the time, so that the barbers today possess medicines unknown even a short time ago. Once more, this is a question of experimenting 'with the help of God', and there are certain rough rules how to proceed. One tries first the bark of a plant or tree not hitherto used; if this proves worthless, one tries the roots, and finally the leaves or fruits. As to why certain parts of plants should contain *cigbe* and others not, there is no answer; or rather the usual answer is *'cigbe u de 'tsu a'*, 'medicines have no king' (that is, follow no proclaimed law): God has made them so, and men can only hope to learn by trial and error or by accepting the wisdom of others.

A strikingly large number of remedies employ plant parasites (called *etú*), and their special medicinal properties are strongly emphasized. If the alien growth of the parasites once suggested to the people some affinity with the nature of diseases and hence a

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possible application of the principle 'like cures like', no one today is aware of this notion. Nor are there any 'theories' as regards such abstruse ingredients as eggshells, the excreta of fowls, twigs from the nest of vultures, or grass from inside an ant-heap. Yet it is also difficult to see how the precept, 'experiment with the help of God', can have led to these peculiar discoveries. If they are 'superstitions', they are not, like other superstitions, the degraded offspring of more elaborate mystic or cosmological speculations. The treatment of lunacy, with its 'male' and 'female' ingredients, seems to suggest something of the kind; but there is no clear link between this cure and that other idea, that lunacy is a residue of 'male' sleeping sickness.[1] And in all the other fantastic remedies their intellectual antecedents are simply not traceable, not even to legends or folk-tales. Perhaps the remedies have been adopted, more or less blindly, from other groups and countries, on some of those informative travels of which the barber-doctors boast. As they stand, they are merely crude and absurd attempts at 'empirical' treatment, instances of that 'blundering' I spoke of before.

Any of the medicines just described might equally be the product of the *cigbeciži*, and a number are in fact identical. But unlike the barber-doctors, the *cigbeciži* also employ the fully irrational, non-therapeutic version of *cigbe*, and even their remedies proper, salves, potions, and the like, are much more often based on recipes of an incongruous and abstruse kind.[2] Thus a 'strong' potion taken for intestinal troubles includes the fluid extracted from the gall-bladder of snakes, a potion alleged to cure smallpox contains a boiled lizard tail, and an ointment for rheumatic pains is composed, among other things, of powdered potsherds which must be obtained from old pots found lying about with the broken side up, any other position rendering the remedy worthless.

While these recipes seem as random and arbitrary as the more abstruse examples of the barber-doctors' art, others betray some underlying 'theory', some vague and often uncertain reasoning from analogy or from the principle 'like cures like'. Thus one expert had a cure for impotence consisting of a potion whose ingredients included, besides various roots and two kinds of pepper, also the powdered genitals of a he-goat.[3] A contraceptive credited with lasting effect is concocted from the roots of the

[1] See above, p. 37.

[2] Of the twenty-two *cigbeci* medicines I recorded fifteen belonged to that category, while the corresponding proportion in the case of the barbers' remedies was six in thirty-four.

[3] I have this incongruous evidence for the efficacy of the treatment. My servant, who was with me when I visited the expert, at once bought and drunk the potion to increase his virility. The next day I had to doctor him for severe indigestion.

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tamarind tree, leaves of baobab, sorghum stalks, and the skin of a fish said to 'die at once when you hold it in your hand', the last ingredient being the most important. Another, temporary, contraceptive is prepared with grass taken from an ant-heap which must have three round mounds and must be broken open with the heel. The magic belt mentioned before, said to prevent pregnancy, is made of leather into which these two ingredients are sewn—hair from the tail of a mule and seeds from locust-beans 'forgotten' (i.e. overlooked) at the harvest. The reasoning from analogy is fairly obvious in the recipe for impotence and in the last appliance. In the lasting contraceptive the underlying 'theory' seems to rest upon this argument: since a freshly caught fish stands for fertility (in dream interpretation), a fish that 'dies at once' might plausibly be identified with its destruction. And of ants, which figure in the temporary contraceptive, it is said that 'one does not know their father and mother'; so that a medicine derived from ants would seem to promise precisely what its users desire. The former 'theory' is my own inference, while the latter, as we shall see, is explicitly mentioned. But it is incomplete apart from being abstruse; for it fails to account for the three mounds that are required and for the peculiar method of opening the ant-heap; nor yet does it state why grass taken from an ant-heap should, in other remedies, serve quite a different purpose.

The moral attitude of the *cigbeciki* towards such dubious practices as facilitating contraception and sterility differs considerably from that of the barber-doctors. While the latter simply claim that they have no chance of dispensing these remedies and shift the blame on their pagan colleagues, these both admit dealing in them and try to justify their actions. They maintain that they dispense these medicines only rarely and in deserving cases. At least, this is true of the medicine alleged to procure permanent sterility; the expert in question assured me that he had given it only once, out of pity, to a woman whose husband was forcing her to sleep with him while her first-born had not yet been weaned. In the case of the temporary expedients the conscience of the *cigbeciki* is more easily satisfied; they merely put up the price for frivolous clients, that is, for 'rich people who do not want children'. As a corrollary, the medicine for impotence is similarly expensive (costing as much as ten shillings), not only because it is difficult to prepare, but because it is something of a luxury; for the expert argued that since this remedy did not 'save people from death' but afforded them 'enjoyment' it was worth paying for. He was fairminded enough to add that he would lower the price in the case of poor clients.

As regards the non-therapeutic medicines, they are credited

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and neighbours first before consulting the accredited experts. One does not pay in money for this kind of assistance, but only offers a small return gift of kolanuts or food. The household remedies are mainly laxatives, or cures for toothache, headache, and slight wounds or bruises, though they include also certain crude treatments to induce abortion or prevent pregnancy—by sucking frogs or drinking the blood from the afterbirth. Normally, one uses infusions of common plants, ash-water or natron (both known as laxatives), ointments made of palm-oil or sheanut-butter, or damp earth (applied to cuts and the like); the more complex herbal concoctions and the use of bark and roots, which make up the *cigbe* proper, are entirely absent.

Certain individuals, are known to possess this more 'professional' knowledge as well. Like the barbers, they apply therapeutic treatments in a profane and would-be rational manner, and like the *cigbeci*, practise the non-therapeutic variety with more or less conspicuous mystical intent. Their skill extends to remedies alleged to increase virility and facilitate pregnancy, though contraceptives are outside the scope of the individual practitioner. 'Fantastic' treatments, however, are not. We already mentioned one such cure meant to remove rheumatic pains through 'drawing them from the body'. Two further treatments are of special interest, one because it is empirically sound, the other because it is surgical as well as daring and involves a clear apprehension of the symptoms of a relatively obscure disease. The first example concerns the use of the severely toxic *datura stramonium*. Many Nupe are aware of the effect of the seeds or powdered leaves which produce stupor and insensitiveness, and the experts prescribe small doses, taken in water, as a cure for pains; with less justification, they also recommend the external application of the leaves, soaked in ash-water and mixed with sheanut butter, for aching limbs. The second example is an alleged cure for sleeping sickness, which must be applied in the early stages of the disease, recognized by the swelling of the neck glands. I only met one expert who knew of this treatment, a man from Mokwa, whose repute had spread far and wide. The surgical treatment involves a deep incision in the skin above the glands, charred leaves of a bean variety being rubbed into the wound; the leaves are said to have a caustic effect so that, when the treatment is repeated twice daily for a week, the glands themselves can be removed. As an after-treatment the patient is given an infusion of bark and roots to drink, and a coarse grass and fish to eat. The expert did not claim that his cure was always effective: it would still depend on 'God's will'; but he showed me a man, bearing the scars of the operation, who, he claimed, had completely recovered.

[i.e., simple medicinal treatments. - Analyst]

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

CULTS[1]

Certain cults and rituals are peculiar to particular Nupe sub-tribes.

794 782 The Ebe have a *Ikinta* masked hunting ritual, which is associated with the ancestral spirits and may be performed to remedy sickness or barrenness; the Gbedye have the masked rituals known as *elo* and *mamma*, while the Benu, although professing Islam, perform a *gani* masked ceremony in which many characteristic features of the *gunnu* cult have been incorporated. The Kusopa offer sacrifices to a mythical ancestor of *kola-nut* planting; the Dibo also have an ancestor cult, the rites for which are performed in the now deserted town of Forgwe in Abuja Emirate, where the ancestral graves are. Another form of ancestor cult, *gugu*, derived from the Yoruba *egungun*, is performed at funerals by the Konú of Kutigi town, who were originally Yoruba slaves.

The Kyedye, although now strongly Moslem, and other riverain groups such as the Bataci and the Kakanda, have cults concerned with water and fishing. These include *ndáduma*, in which annual sacrifices are made to the spirits of the river to ensure and limit the annual flood, and *ketsá* in which sacrifices to the spirit of a large rock in mid-stream near Jebba are made to cure illness and bring good fortune in fishing. The chains of Tsoede, which may be used as instruments of ordeal, are also the centre of numerous sacrificial rites. In the Kyedye villages of Giragi and Fofo sacrifices are offered to protect the village from sickness and to bring fertility and prosperity. Usually performed in December at the time of the Niger's second flood, and in February before the start of the fishing season, they are repeated later as a kind of "harvest thanksgiving," when palm-oil and beer are poured over the chain. Each village has a priest whose duty it is to safeguard the chain and make sacrifices to it.

The gunnu cult[2]

794 793 The *gunnu* cult, the most vital religious cult in Nupe, is concerned with fertility, crops, health, and general prosperity. It is performed both on fixed dates and in times of misfortune such as drought, epidemics, failure of crops, etc. It is common to all sections of Nupe, though according to legend it originated among the Beni, but is not necessarily enacted on the same date by all. The date chosen is generally one of three: the fifth month, the beginning of the harvest of early bulrush millet; the ninth month, the beginning of the guinea-corn harvest; or the 13th month, the end of the dry season. Rites are generally performed towards the end of the month, when the moon rises late. There is a *gunnu* priest in each community who is called *ndazó* or *gunnuhó*. There are drummers everywhere, but the ritual dress, sacrificial food, and the duration of taboos vary from section to section. The performance is in three parts: the first performed at night by boys and men; the second next morning when there is a sacrifice and communal meal and short dance by the men —this part is secret; the third part consists of a general dance by men and women performed later on the same day.

MEDICINES[3]

278 789 Medicine (*cigbe*) is regarded as an important means of contending with the power of evil, though it may serve both good and evil ends. Rituals or cults are regarded as, in a sense, a delegation of God's power in compensation for his remoteness, and are in the hands of sub-tribes or villages. Medicines, on the other hand, are, except in aberrant form, in the hands of individual practitioners and put to use for individuals.

Nupe medicines are concoctions of roots and other ingredients which may have to be found under particular circumstances or treated in a particular way, used

[1] Nadel, 1942, pp. 23–5; 1946a; Temple, 1919, pp. 113, 331–3; Notes on Kede District, 1950.

[2] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 75–84; see also Nadel, 1937a, for details of the ritual and a study of its significance.

[3] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 17–21, 132–62 and *passim*.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

278 either with or without specified actions and utterances. Their avowed purposes are
789 frequently therapeutic, but also include defences against theft, witchcraft, and devices to render one invisible. Nupe leech-lore includes both rational empirical cures and mystical rites which can produce no result beyond increasing the confidence of the user. Nor is there any distinction in Nupe vocabulary, for the term *cigbe* is used for all medicines. Medicines may be distinguished as those which are practically effective or may be easily taken as being effective by practitioners, and those whose objective irrationality cannot be mistaken. The latter class may include devices for rendering a man invisible, medicines for killing thieves and fending off witchcraft, and for making hoes do their work in half the normal time.

791 There are four main types of practitioners of medicine: the guild of Moslem
759 barber-doctors, the pagan order of *cigbeciši*, and two kinds of individual
306 practitioners.

The barber-doctors' guild is recognized by the *Etsu* Nupe but is confined almost entirely to the towns. The guild head occupies an important position at court. They are entirely concerned with therapeutic medicines, but are regarded with contempt in the country districts where people feel that a barber cannot know about such things.

791 The *cigbeciši*, formerly recognized by the *Etsu*, but since replaced by the
789 barber-doctors, are much more loosely organized than the guild. Whereas the latter keep their knowledge mainly within their lineages, the *cigbeciši* crafts can be bought by anyone. There is little corporate activity beyond occasional gatherings at the local head's house to discuss practice. The head is traditionally responsible for all new medicines. Offerings are made to the spirits of the order and through them to *Sokó*, the ultimate source of *cigbe*, whenever a new medicine is discovered. The names of spirits may also be introduced in the application of medicines, but there appears to be no invocation. With this mystical approach there is a greater sense of the implications of "medicine" for good and for evil. While Moslem barbers, though not concerned with the more "dangerous" medicines, sell without scruple medicines for immoral purposes, such as those to induce barrenness in women, *cigbeciši* claim to be very particular as to whom they sell the more powerful *cigbe*. The powers of witchcraft are often said to require medicines, while the conflict between witchcraft and anti-witchcraft is sometimes represented as a struggle between good and bad *cigbe*.

Individual practitioners are of two kinds: those who provide cures for petty ailments, and Moslem mallams and scholars who write a passage from the Koran which is washed off and drunk by the patient. They also provide amulets containing Koran texts, as elsewhere in Islamic West Africa.

Some medicines, the ingredients of which are not known, belong to descent groups and are kept in vessels into which libations of beer and offerings of blood are poured to the ancestors.

754 The neophyte to the order of witches as imagined by the Nupe must, it is
751 believed, bathe himself in certain medicines and observe certain taboos, and the masked dancer who impersonates and is possessed by the spirit of the anti-witchcraft society[10] uses certain medicines while others are placed on the mask to give it and its dancer their unique character. There are in addition individual medicines used as defences against magic, and ordeal medicines which will kill the witch who drinks, but leave the innocent unharmed.

Divination[11]

781 Divination plays an important part in Nupe life and is used not only to determine the rites to be performed in particular situations but to decide such matters as the election of a high officer of state. The two methods used are the old system,

[10] See below.
[11] Nadel, 1942, p. 379; 1954a, pp. 36–67.